

Top Teachers Recognized



ESA Region 1
Nancy Block — Webster School District

“Teachers need three innate beliefs: they need to care about kids, care about themselves and care about our world.”

A colorful teaching career spanning 18 years took Nancy Block to Wyoming, Minnesota and Michigan, before bringing her back to her hometown of Webster, where she teaches fourth grade. Block always admired and respected her teachers in Webster, and as a freshman at the University of South Dakota, she realized she wanted to continue that for the next generation.

After returning to Webster, Block was honored to receive the district’s Dorothy Garrick Award, named after one of those teachers she looked up to as a youngster. She also serves as an ESA Language Arts Curriculum Committee member, an NCA committee member and a technology training member for the accelerated reader at Webster.

Parents praise Block for her organization and efficiency in the classroom and beyond. She keeps the lines of communication open between parent, student and teacher and fosters more parental involvement in the educational process. When disciplining, Block is firm, but kind, and parents say it is obvious that she cares about her students and wants them to succeed. One parent wrote: “My children have all grown academically and have matured because of her teaching.”



ESA Region 2
Cher May – Sioux Falls School District

“When I see and hear of the successes of my students,
I know my mission is complete.”

Currently at Terry Redlin Elementary, Cher May has been an English Language Learner teacher in the Sioux Falls School District for 15 years. In that capacity, she may get students who can’t speak a word of English when they walk through her doors. But she looks at that challenge as something bigger—an opportunity. It’s an opportunity to work with students and their families for several years, and it’s an opportunity to learn something herself, and to teach others about English Language Learners and diversity in today’s schools.

When May first started out, there was no ELL curriculum in place. Since then, she has served on committees to review, pilot and implement ELL curriculum in the Sioux Falls district and beyond. She recently represented South Dakota in Washington, D.C., for the WIDA (World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment) workshop to align standards for the new kindergarten test of the ACCESS, a standardized test that measures English language proficiency.

Former students have said they would not be where they are today without May as she made the process of learning a new language and adapting to a new school, and in many cases, a whole new country, seem less intimidating and less difficult—even fun.

Colleagues admire her tireless research efforts. Even after 15 years in the field, May still keeps current on the most recent ELL developments and best practices. Oftentimes, she involves the student's whole family in the educational process, making sure everyone feels welcome in her classroom.



ESA Region 3
Anne Moege - Mitchell School District

“Outstanding educators are those who take time to get to know their students, those who have a passion for what they teach and who strive to create meaningful, relevant lessons for their students, those who maintain a balance of organization, flexibility and fun in the classroom, and those who continually challenge not only their students but also themselves.”

Anne Moege began her career 18 years ago, teaching high school English and French in Corsica. In 2003, she changed things up when she moved to Mitchell and began teaching seventh-grade language arts. She holds a B.A. in English, with minors in education and French from the University of South Dakota. In 2005, she obtained her master's in secondary education, learning and teaching from Northern State University.

A member of Mitchell Middle School's technology and professional development committees, Moege integrated writing and reading by using a collaborative wiki while reading the novel, “Gathering Blue.” She currently serves as president of the South Dakota Council of Teachers of English. She also participated in the National Writing Project last April.

A colleague wrote: “Few people I know are as committed to their students, their jobs and their family as Anne Moege. ... I am a better teacher and a better person for having known her.”



ESA Region 4
Darlyne Johnson - Groton School District

“Teaching is serving. Teaching is giving. Teaching is living for another.”

A teacher with 13 years of experience, Darlyne Johnson has been a high school math teacher in Groton for the last 10 of them. But her experience teaching extends well beyond what just the numbers would indicate. After graduating from Northern State University and then teaching for three years, Johnson took some time off to take on the most important teaching job of a lifetime—that of a parent. She was always connected to teaching though—giving piano lessons while also raising her family.

Listed in Who's Who Among America's Teachers, several of Johnson's students have placed at both regional and national math competitions. Johnson expects a lot out of her students, and in turn, expects a lot out of herself as a teacher. That tireless pursuit of excellence carries over into each lesson. Attending workshops, seminars and conferences keeps Johnson on the cutting edge when it comes to 21st century learning.

A former colleague and Groton Area school board members writes: “She uses a variety of methods to help her students learn and excel. ... A teacher is a success when the students succeed. Mrs. Johnson gets her students to work hard by treating them with respect, challenging them to do their best and showing her concern for their improvement.”

ESA Region 5
Loris Lindskov - Isabel School District

Loris Lindskov's 50-year teaching career has taken him all over the Midwest. Most recently, he spent two years at Isabel, where he taught math and science. For him, the position at Isabel meant returning home and when Isabel closed at the end of last school year, Lindskov decided to return to teaching in a postsecondary setting full time. This year, he'll be an instructor at the Oglala Lakota College in Eagle Butte.

So what's kept him going all this time? Lindskov says in a nutshell, it's the success stories of his students. While he doesn't think any of his classroom activities are particularly special or unique in nature, he always tries to present subject material in a way the students can understand. Entering his 50th year in the field, Lindskov still understands that relating to the students is key to success as a teacher.



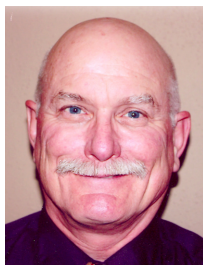
ESA Region 6
Lisa Handcock - Agar-Blunt-Onida School District

"Teachers can't control where the students come from or what their home life is, but since we spend most of each day with the student, we need to make that time count. We need to be the person they can look up to and trust."

Though she has held several different positions, Lisa Handcock has spent her entire career in one district. She's seen a lot of changes in her 17 years with the Agar-Blunt-Onida School District. After receiving her degree in elementary education from Northern State University, she taught kindergarten in Blunt and first grade in Onida before Agar was absorbed into the district. Handcock is currently the fourth-grade teacher at Onida Elementary, but she also spent 11 years as the Title I teacher there.

Handcock is a South Dakota Counts lead teacher—training others within her district—and she also was instrumental in implementing the Promethean boards at the elementary level. She has participated in a yearlong Writer's Workshop and has also been trained in South Dakota Reads. Handcock says she constantly seeks out professional development opportunities in order to improve her teaching, and she credits Onida's entire teaching community with her successes.

Colleagues say Handcock recognizes that each student learns at his or her own pace and tailors the educational experience to the individual. "She treats all students with respect and kindness," wrote a colleague who recommended her.



ESA Region 7
Tom Mead - Spearfish School District

"It is the goal of every student and the task of every teacher to share their knowledge and understanding of the world in their classroom."

Tom Mead took the long road to education, spending several years working outside of the field before answering the call to teach. After receiving a B.A. in biology from the University of South Dakota and a master's in wildlife management, Mead spent the next decade and a half working before obtaining certification to teach secondary and middle school from Augustana College in 1989. He's been teaching science at Spearfish Middle School ever since.

In 1990, Mead took part in pilot testing modules through the University of California, Berkeley. Mead

asked his students to become part of the learning. Sharing experiences helped Mead and the students learn from each other, and Mead realized that students need to be involved in their own learning. He teaches all of his classes through an interdisciplinary approach, so his students are learning more than just science. He also gives students a chance to experience science through real-world application, which teaches them that science is present in their everyday lives, in just about everything they do.

A supervisor writes: “It is always fun to visit Tom’s class. Tom’s ambition, work and commitment to education put him at the top of the scale. Mr. Mead is an excellent role model of a teacher.”